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Environmentalists protest as Biden administration approves huge oil export terminal off Texas coast



Sunshine makes its way through a break in the clouds on Sept. 22, 2020, in Surfside Beach, Texas.

Associated Press
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Environmentalists protest as Biden administration approves huge oil export terminal off Texas coast

From Front

By MATTHEW DALY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In a move that environmentalists called a betrayal, the Biden administration has approved the construction of a deep-water oil export terminal off the Texas coast that would be the largest of its kind in the United States.

The Sea Port Oil Terminal being developed off Freeport, Texas, will be able to load two supertankers at once, with an export capacity of 2 million barrels of crude oil per day. The \$1.8 billion project by Houston-based Enterprise Products Partners received a deepwater port license from the Department of Transportation's Maritime Administration this week, the final step in a five-year federal review.

Environmentalists denounced the license approval, saying it contradicted President Joe Biden's climate agenda and would lead to "disastrous" planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions, equivalent to nearly 90 coal-fired power plants. The action could jeopardize Biden's support from environmental allies and young voters already disenchanted by the Democratic administration's approval last year of the massive Willow oil project in Alaska.

"Nothing about this project is in alignment with President Biden's climate and environmental justice goals," said Kelsey Crane, senior policy advocate at Earthworks, an environmental group that has long opposed the export terminal. "The communities that will be impacted by (the oil terminal) have once again been ignored and will be forced to live with the threat of more oil spills, explosions and pollution," Crane said. "The best way to protect the



An oil tanker passes along a channel, March 2, 2022, in Port Aransas, Texas.

Associated Press

public and the climate from the harms of oil is to keep it in the ground."

In a statement after the license was approved, the Maritime Administration said the project meets a number of congressionally mandated requirements, including extensive environmental reviews and a federal determination that the port's operation is in the national interest.

"While the Biden-Harris administration is accelerating America's transition to a clean energy future, action is also being taken to manage the transition in the near term," said the agency, which is nicknamed MARAD.

The administration's multiyear review included consultation with at least 20 federal, state and local agencies, MARAD said. The agency ultimately determined that the project would have no significant effect on the production or consumption of U.S. crude oil. "Although the (greenhouse gas) emissions associated with the upstream production and downstream end use of the

crude oil to be exported from the project may represent a significant amount of GHG emissions, these emissions largely already occur as part of the U.S. crude oil supply chain," the agency said in an email to The Associated Press. "Therefore, the project itself is likely to have minimal effect on the current GHG emissions associated with the overall U.S. crude oil supply chain." Environmental groups scoffed at that claim.

"The Biden administration must stop flip-flopping on fossil fuels," said Cassidy DiPaola of Fossil Free Media, a nonprofit group that opposes the use of fossil fuels such as oil, coal and natural gas.

"Approving the Sea Port Oil Terminal after pausing LNG exports is not just bad news for our climate, it's incoherent politics," DiPaola said. Biden "can't claim to be a climate leader one day and then turn around and grant a massive handout to the oil industry the next. It's time for President Biden to listen to the overwhelming majority

of voters who want to see a shift away from fossil fuels, not a doubling down on dirty and deadly energy projects." DiPaola was referring to the administration's January announcement that it is delaying consideration of new natural gas export terminals in the United States, even as gas shipments to Europe and Asia have soared since Russia invaded Ukraine.

The decision, announced at the start of the 2024 presidential election year, aligned the Democratic president with environmentalists who fear the huge increase in exports of liquefied natural gas, or LNG, is locking in potentially catastrophic planet-warming emissions even as Biden has pledged to cut climate pollution in half by 2030.

Industry groups and Republicans have condemned the pause, saying LNG exports stabilize global energy markets, support thousands of American jobs and reduce global greenhouse emissions by transitioning countries away from coal, a far dirtier fossil fuel.

Enterprise CEO Jim Teague hailed the oil project's approval. The terminal will provide "a more environmentally friendly, safe, efficient and cost-effective way to deliver crude oil to global markets," he said in a statement.

The project will include two pipelines to carry crude from shore to the deepwater port, reducing the need for ship-to-ship transfers of oil. The terminal is expected to begin operations by 2027.

Since the project was first submitted for federal review in 2019, "Enterprise has worked diligently with various federal, state and local authorities, and participated in multiple public meetings that have allowed individuals and stakeholder groups to learn about the project and provide their comments," including some studies that have been translated into Spanish and Vietnamese, the company said in a statement. More than half of Freeport's 10,600 residents are Hispanic, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.

Sen. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, hailed the license approval as "a major victory for Texas's energy industry" and said the Biden administration had delayed the Sea Port terminal and other projects for years. "After tireless work by my office and many others to secure this deepwater port license, I'm thrilled that we're helping bring more jobs to Texas and greater energy security to America and our allies," Cruz said in a statement. "That this victory was delayed by years of needless bureaucratic dithering shows why we need broader permitting reform in this country."

The oil export facility, one of several license applications under federal review, is located 30 miles offshore of Brazoria County, Texas, in the Gulf of Mexico. □

The Biden administration will require thousands more gun dealers to run background checks on buyers

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and COLLEEN LONG

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Thousands more firearms dealers across the United States will have to run background checks on buyers at gun shows or other places outside brick-and-mortar stores, according to a Biden administration rule that will soon go into effect. The rule aims to close a loophole that has allowed tens of thousands of guns to be sold every year by unlicensed dealers who do not perform background checks to ensure the potential buyer is not legally prohibited from having a firearm. Gun rights groups are expected to fight it in court.

It's the administration's latest effort to combat gun violence. But in a contentious election year, it's also an effort to show voters especially younger ones for whom gun violence deeply resonates that the White House is trying to stop the deaths.

"This is going to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers and felons," President Joe Biden said in a statement. "And my administration is going to continue to do everything we possibly can to save lives. Congress needs to finish



President Joe Biden's nominee to lead the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, Steve Dettelbach speaks during an event at White House in Washington, April 11, 2022.

Associated Press

the job and pass universal background checks legislation now."

The rule, which was finalized this week, makes clear that anyone who sells firearms predominantly to earn a profit must be federally licensed and conduct background checks, regardless of whether they are selling on the internet, at a gun show or at a brick-and-mortar store, Attorney General Merrick Garland told reporters.

Biden has made curtailing gun violence a major part

of his administration and re-election campaign, creating the White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention overseen by Vice President Kamala Harris. Biden also has urged Congress to ban so-called assault weapons something Democrats shied from even just a few years ago.

The rule is likely to be challenged in court by gun rights activists who believe the Democratic president is unfairly targeting gun owners. The National Rifle Association said in a statement

that it is "already working to use all means available to stop this unlawful rule."

The National Shooting Sports Foundation, an industry trade group, also has warned of a court challenge if the rule was finalized as written. Lawrence Keane, the foundation's senior vice president and general counsel, said Thursday that the organization was reviewing the regulation after contending previously that the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives was over-

stepping its legal authority. Biden administration officials said they are confident the rule, which drew more than 380,000 public comments, would withstand lawsuits.

The administration first proposed the rule in August, after the passage of the most sweeping gun violence bill in decades, a bipartisan compromise in response to the massacre of 19 students and two teachers at a Uvalde, Texas elementary school.

That law expanded the definition of those who are "engaged in the business" of selling firearms, and are required to become licensed by the ATF and therefore run background checks. The rule, which implements the change in the law, will take effect 30 days after it is published in the Federal Register.

There are already roughly 80,000 federally licensed firearms dealers. Administration officials believe the new rule will impact more than 20,000 dealers who have gotten away with selling firearms without a license and performing background checks at places like gun shows and over the internet by claiming they aren't "engaged in the business" of firearm sales. □

Tennessee lawmakers send bill to ban first-cousin marriages to governor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — The Republican-led Tennessee Legislature has overwhelmingly voted to send GOP Gov. Bill Lee a proposal that would ban marriage between first cousins.

The House cast a 75-2 vote Thursday on the bill after the Senate previously approved it without any opposition.

But a particularly vocal opponent, Republican Rep. Gino Bulso, took up most of the debate time, as he argued for an amendment to allow first-cousin marriages if the couple first seeks counseling from a genetic counselor.

In a previous committee hearing on the bill, Bulso lightheartedly shared a story about how his grandparents were first cousins who came to the U.S. from Italy in the 1920s, then traveled from Ohio to Tennessee to get married. He and other lawmakers laughed, and Bulso voted for the bill in that committee.

Then during Thursday's floor debate, the socially conservative attorney argued that the risk of married cousins having a child with birth defects does not exist for gay couples. He contended there is no compelling government interest to

ban same-sex cousins from getting married, saying that would run afoul of the U.S. Supreme Court's gay marriage decision.

He also couched his argument by saying that he thought the Supreme Court decision on gay marriage was "grievously wrong." Bulso has supported legislation aimed at the LGBTQ community. That includes a bill he is sponsoring that would largely ban displaying pride flags in public school classrooms, which civil liberties advocates have contended runs afoul of the U.S. Constitution.

"The question is, is there a

public health issue with a male marrying a male first cousin?" Bulso said. "And I think the answer is no."

Ultimately, lawmakers vot-

ed down Bulso's amendment and approved the ban proposed by Democratic Rep. Darren Jernigan. □



The Tennessee Capitol is seen, Jan. 8, 2020, in Nashville, Tenn.
Associated Press

Freight railroads ask courts to throw out new rule requiring two-person crews on trains

By JOSH FUNK
AP Business Writer

Four railroads have asked federal appeals courts to throw out a new rule that would require two-person train crews in most circumstances, saying the mandate is arbitrary, capricious and an illegal abuse of discretion.

The identical challenges of the Federal Railroad Administration's rule were all filed this week in different appellate courts on behalf of Union Pacific, BNSF and two short line railroads — the Indiana Railroad and Florida East Coast Railway. The new federal requirement, announced last week, was a milestone in organized labor's long fight to preserve the practice and came amid increasing scrutiny into railroad safety, especially in the wake of the fiery February 2023 derailment in eastern Ohio. Most of those railroads did not immediately offer additional explanation for why they don't like the rule, but the industry has long opposed such a regulation and the Association of American Railroads trade group said last week that



A maintenance worker walks past the company logo on the side of a locomotive in the Union Pacific Railroad fueling yard in north Denver, Oct. 18, 2006.

Associated Press

the rule was unfounded and not supported by safety data. The Indiana Railroad like many short lines across the country already operates with one-person crews, but the major freight railroads all have two-person crews that their union contracts require. Union Pacific said in a statement "this rule, which lacks any data showing two people in a cab are safer than

one, hinders our ability to compete in a world where technology is changing the transportation industry and prevents us from preparing our workforce for jobs of the future."

BNSF deferred comment to AAR, and the two smaller railroads did not immediately respond to messages Thursday.

The regulators who announced the rule last Tues-

day and the unions that have lobbied for the policy for years all argue there are clear safety benefits to having two people in the cab of locomotives to help operate the train because they can keep each other alert and the conductor can respond immediately to any problems they encounter, including serving as the initial first-responder to a derailment.

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg has said the need to improve railroad safety was made glaringly clear last year when a Norfolk Southern train derailed on the outskirts of a town on the Ohio-Pennsylvania border and spilled an assortment of hazardous chemicals that caught fire. That East Palestine derailment inspired calls for reform that have stalled in Congress. But Buttigieg and the Federal Railroad Administration declined to comment Thursday on the legal challenges to the new rule that is set to take effect in early June.

The head of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen union Eddie Hall said this legal challenge is just another sign the railroads "place profits over safety." He said keeping two people in the locomotive won't keep railroads from investing in new technology, and the industry should focus on improving safety.

"This move by the railroads was predictable. The railroads and their trade association appeal every safety reform," Hall said. □

Almost 10% of Florida's youngest children were missed during the 2020 census



Students from Thomas Leadership Academy play on the school's playground in Eatonville, Fla., Aug. 23, 2023.

Associated Press

By MIKE SCHNEIDER
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Children age 4 and under in Florida were undercounted by almost 10% during the 2020 census, according to estimates released Thursday by the U.S. Census Bureau. The bureau said the estimated error was the largest undercount of young children by any U.S. state. More than 112,000 children age 4 or younger were overlooked in Florida during the 2020 tally which helps determine federal funding and political power every 10 years, according to Demographic Analysis estimates using administrative records to estimate the population's size.

The Demographic Analysis is one of the tools the Census Bureau uses to calculate how good a job it did of counting every U.S. resident during a census that determines how many congressional seats each state gets. Vermont had the smallest undercount of young children during the 2020 census,

with a negligible rate of 0.02%, the equivalent of six children.

Preschool-age children are the most difficult age group to count and are regularly missed during the nation's head count, an oversight that can shortchange communities of federal funding for programs like Head Start. During the 2020 census, an estimated 1 million children age 4 and under nationwide were overlooked, an undercount of almost 5.5%.

Parents often don't know they should include their babies on the census forms, and, at other times, young children are missed in multigenerational households or if they live in two households because of joint custody.

"We know these undercounts are often correlated with undercounts of certain race and ethnicity groups along with other factors that we were not able to measure directly," Census Bureau Director Robert Santos said in a statement. "We are diligently working to address this issue." □

China sanctions 2 U.S. defense companies and says they support arms sales to Taiwan

Associated Press

BEIJING (AP) — China on Thursday announced rare sanctions against two U.S. defense companies over what it called their support for arms sales to Taiwan, the self-governing island democracy Beijing claims as its own territory to be recovered by force if necessary.

The announcement freezes the assets of General Atomics Aeronautical Systems and General Dynamics Land Systems held within China. It also bars the companies' management from entering the country.

Filings show General Dynamics operates a half-dozen Gulfstream and jet aviation services operations in China, which remains heavily reliant on foreign aerospace technology even as it attempts to build its own presence in the field.

The company also helps make the Abrams tank being purchased by Taiwan to replace outdated armor intended to deter or resist an invasion from China.

General Atomics produces the Predator and Reaper drones used by the U.S.



An MQ9 Predator drone is displayed at the Berlin Air Show ILA in Berlin, Germany, on May 30, 2016.

Associated Press

military. Chinese authorities did not go into details on the company's alleged involvement with supplying arms to Taiwan.

Beijing has long threatened such sanctions, but has rarely issued them as its economy reels from the COVID-19 pandemic, high unemployment and a sharp decline in foreign investment.

"The continued U.S. arms

sales to China's Taiwan region seriously violate the one-China principle and the provisions of the three China-U.S. joint communiqués, interfere in China's internal affairs, and undermine China's sovereignty and territorial integrity," China's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. It insists that the mainland and the island to which Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist forces

fled amid civil war in 1949 remain part of a single Chinese nation.

Sanctions were leveled under Beijing's recently enacted Law of the People's Republic of China on Countering Foreign Sanctions, aimed at retaliating against U.S. financial and travel restrictions on Chinese officials accused of human rights abuses in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Kong.

General Dynamics fully owned entities are registered in Hong Kong, the southern Chinese semi-autonomous city over which Beijing has steadily been increasing its political and economic control to the point that it faces no vocal opposition and has seen its critics silenced, imprisoned or forced into exile.

The two companies did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

China has threatened action against foreign companies and governments that aid Taiwan's defense and the U.S. military presence in the region, leading to commercial boycotts and diplomatic standoffs.

China banned American firms Lockheed Martin Corp. and Raytheon Missiles & Defense from the Chinese market in retaliation for the use of one of their planes and a missile to shoot down a suspected spy balloon that flew over the continental United States last year. Similar balloons have frequently been discovered floating over Taiwan and into the Pacific Ocean. □

Wife of Julian Assange says Biden's comments mean case could be moving in the right direction

By JILL LAWLESS
Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The wife of Julian Assange said Thursday her husband's legal case "could be moving in the right direction" after President Joe Biden confirmed the U.S. may drop charges against the imprisoned WikiLeaks founder.

It came as supporters in several cities rallied to demand the release of Assange, on the fifth anniversary of his incarceration in London's high-security Belmarsh prison.

Biden said Wednesday that his administration is "considering" a request from Australia to drop the decade-long U.S. push to prosecute Assange for publishing a

trove of classified American documents. The proposal would see Assange, an Australian citizen, return home rather than be sent to the U.S. to face espionage charges.

Officials have not provided more details, but Stella Assange said the comments are "a good sign."

"It looks like things could be moving in the right direction," she told the BBC, saying the indictment was "a Trump legacy and really Joe Biden should have dropped it from day one."

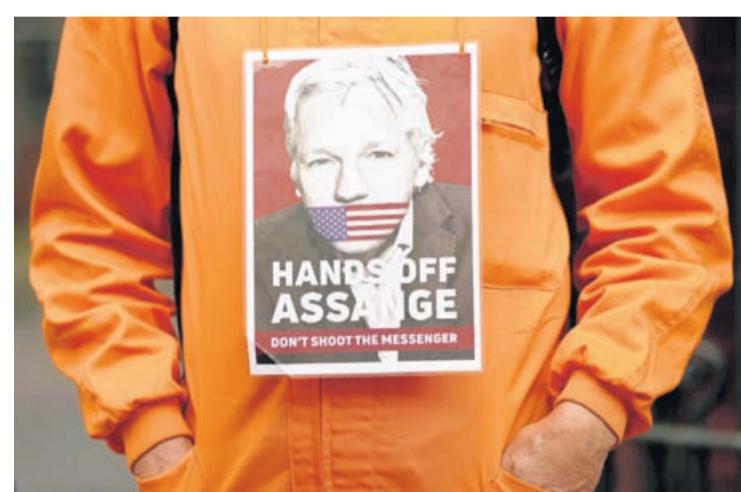
Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the comment was encouraging.

"Mr. Assange has already paid a significant price and

enough is enough," Albanese told the Australian Broadcasting Corp.

Assange has been indicted on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over his website's publication of classified U.S. documents almost 15 years ago. American prosecutors allege that Assange, 52, encouraged and helped U.S. Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning steal diplomatic cables and military files that WikiLeaks published, putting lives at risk.

Australia argues there is a disconnect between the U.S. treatment of Assange and Manning. Then-U.S. President Barack Obama commuted Manning's 35-



A Protester stands in front of the Ecuadorian Embassy in London, Thursday, April 11, 2024, where WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was arrested five years ago.

Associated Press

year sentence to seven years, which allowed her release in 2017. Assange's supporters say he is a jour-

nalist protected by the First Amendment who exposed U.S. military wrongdoing in Iraq and Afghanistan. □

Vietnam sentences real estate tycoon Truong My Lan to death in its largest-ever fraud case

By ANIRUDDHA GHOSAL

Associated Press

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) —

Real estate tycoon Truong My Lan was sentenced Thursday to death by a court in Ho Chi Minh City in southern Vietnam in the country's largest financial fraud case ever, state media Vietnam Net said.

The 67-year-old chair of the real estate company Van Thinh Phat was formally charged with fraud amounting to \$12.5 billion nearly 3% of the country's 2022 GDP.

Lan illegally controlled Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank between 2012 and 2022 and allowed 2,500 loans that resulted in losses of \$27 billion to the bank, reported state media VnExpress. The court asked her to compensate the bank \$26.9 million.

Despite mitigating circumstances this was a first-time offense and Lan participated in charity activities the court attributed its harsh sentence to the seriousness of the case, saying Lan was



Business woman Truong My Lan attends a trial in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam on Thursday, April 11, 2024.

Associated Press

at the helm of an orchestrated and sophisticated criminal enterprise that had serious consequences with no possibility of the money being recovered, VnExpress said.

Her actions "not only violate the property manage-

ment rights of individuals and organizations but also push SCB (Saigon Joint Stock Commercial Bank) into a state of special control; eroding people's trust in the leadership of the Party and State," VnExpress quoted the judgement as

saying.

Her niece, Truong Hue Van, the chief executive of Van Thinh Phat, was sentenced to 17 years in prison for aiding her aunt.

Lan and her family established the Van Thinh Phat company in 1992 after

Vietnam shed its state-run economy in favor of a more market-oriented approach that was open to foreigners. She had started out helping her mother, a Chinese businesswoman, to sell cosmetics in Ho Chi Minh City's oldest market, according to state media Tien Phong.

Van Thinh Phat would grow to become one of Vietnam's richest real estate firms, with projects including luxury residential buildings, offices, hotels and shopping centers. This made her a key player in the country's financial industry. She orchestrated the 2011 merger of the beleaguered SCB bank with two other lenders in coordination with Vietnam's central bank. The court found that she used this approach to tap SCB for cash. She indirectly owned more than 90% of the bank a charge she denied and approved thousands of loans to "ghost companies," according to government documents. □

Mexico wants U.N. to suspend Ecuador over its police raid on the Mexican embassy in Quito

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico's president said Thursday his country wants the United Nations to suspend Ecuador from the world body as part of a complaint to the top U.N. court over Ecuador's police raid last week on the Mexican embassy in Quito. Tensions between Mexico and Ecuador have soared since late last week when Ecuadorian authorities forced their way into the diplomatic mission to arrest Ecuador's former Vice President Jorge Glas who had been holed up there seeking asylum in Mexico.

Mexico filed its complaint Thursday at the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands asking the U.N. to suspend Ecuador, although a U.N. spokesman in New York said it would be up to other member states to decide on suspending a



Ecuador's Vice President Jorge Glas speaks during an interview at his office in Quito, Ecuador, Sept. 12, 2017.

Associated Press

country.

President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, at a news conference in Mexico City, railed against Ecuador and said that the court, "in accordance with the United Nations charter, should approve the expulsion, and there should be no veto"

from the U.N. Security Council.

López Obrador said Mexico is demanding a public apology from Ecuador for the raid, reparation of damages and a promise not to do it again. Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Gabriela Sommerfeld said her country would

defend its actions and said an apology "is not something that is under discussion at this moment."

The two countries have been tussling over Glas, a convicted criminal and fugitive, since he took refuge at Mexico's embassy in December.

Ecuador has argued that Glas has been targeted for crimes, not for political reasons, and that Mexico should not have been considering asylum for him. On April 5, Ecuadorian police scaled the embassy walls and broke into the building. Roberto Canseco, Mexico's head of consular affairs and the highest ranking diplomat present since Ecuador expelled the ambassador earlier in the week, tried to keep them from entering, even pushing a large cabinet in front of a door. But

police restrained him and pushed him to the floor as they carried Glas out.

A copy of Mexico's formal complaint filed with the ICJ said, "Mr. Canseco was violently assaulted at the Embassy library," adding, "This resulted in injuries to his arms, legs, face, back, and neck, as well as psychological harm."

The complaint claims that "a member of the United Nations which has persistently violated the Principles contained therein may be expelled from the Organization."

It asked the court "to suspend Ecuador as member of the United Nations" until it issues "a public apology recognizing its violations to the fundamental principles and norms of international law" and agrees to reparations. □

Anticipating the grand opening of The St. Regis Aruba

The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba reveals their mega campaign for 2024: WIN A MERCEDES-BENZ G-CLASS 2024!

Palm Beach, Aruba | Since 2019 The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba has been known for its thrilling giveaways like the Ferrari giveaway, Mega Win campaigns with the most attractive cash prizes, exotic vacations and many more. This year, as they are preparing for the grand opening of The St. Regis Aruba, they are giving away a Mercedes-Benz G-Class 2024!

All visitors of The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba have the opportunity to participate to win this amazing car by being or becoming a member of the VIP Club where they can enjoy unique benefits.

Players can start to accumulate points as of April 12th till November 22nd, to receive raffle tickets in order to participate. Players can earn their raffle tickets as follows:

- Every 300 points on slot machines / \$150 of theoretical win on tables = 1 raffle ticket.
- Every check of \$150 at Casa Nonna New York, BLT Steak and Divi Lounge = 1 raffle ticket

There will be **50 finalists** competing in the grand finale on November 22nd to be the lucky winner of the Mercedes-Benz G-Class 2024! There are four ways to become a finalist:

- Weekly Drawings (every Saturday with \$12,000 in prizes): selecting 31 finalists
- Golden Key on November 16th: selecting 2 finalists
- Top Player's Race on November 21st: selecting 9 finalists
- Last Chance Drawing on November 22nd: selecting 8 finalists

This campaign has gathered local and international attention as this is the second time that The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba raffles a high-end luxury car in the Caribbean region and gives their players the opportunity to win this unique car.

The Mercedes-Benz G-Class 2024 has a boxy exterior, which is its iconic charm, in addition to making a striking visual statement for its bold black exterior and lavish red interior. Once inside, you will find all the Mercedes-Benz luxury hallmarks, including red leather comfort seats and Burmester surround system which consists of 15 loudspeakers. You will find everything that you are looking for in a car with this Luxury Wagon: refinement, comfort and performance of a turbo-charged V8 engine. This luxury vehicle offers an unique experience and one player will be the lucky winner on November 22nd.

The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba is very proud to bring this car to the island in anticipation of the grand opening of The St. Regis Aruba, as it reflects the luxury and high quality of The Ritz-Carlton and St. Regis brand.

The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton Aruba offers high quality service and offers a unique and memorable experience. For more participation details of the Luxury Wagon Campaign 2024, please visit The Casino VIP Desk at The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton Aruba or contact 527-2276/ 527-2277 and they will be happy to assist you with further details on how to participate and WIN! □

THE CASINO AT THE RITZ-CARLTON ARUBA

THE CASINO AT ST REGIS ARUBA



APRIL 12 - NOVEMBER 22, 2024

Receive one (1) raffle ticket for every 300 points /\$150 theoretical win or with every \$150 check at Casa Nonna New York, BLT Steak or Divi Lounge.

SELECTING 50 FINALISTS

WEEKLY DRAWINGS
31 FINALISTS
APRIL 20TH TILL NOVEMBER 16TH

GOLDEN KEY DRAWING
2 FINALISTS
NOVEMBER 16TH

TOP PLAYER'S RACE DRAWING
9 FINALISTS
NOVEMBER 21TH

LAST CHANCE DRAWING
8 FINALISTS
NOVEMBER 22TH

Must be over the age of 18 years. The Casino at The Ritz-Carlton, Aruba encourages Responsible Gaming.

Prohibited by law: leaving the island with seashells, white sand or corals

(Oranjestad)—Often times, the customs department at the airport intercepts many tourists leaving the island with seashells, white sand and/or corals as souvenirs.

Conforming to the international treaty of CITES and our local law which protects our Flora & Fauna, it is absolutely prohibited to take any seashell, sand and coral outside of Aruba. This is to protect our environment. The high number of seashells, coral and amount of sand confiscated is very strange and it is suspected that our own locals are the ones selling these to the tourists, which is unacceptable.

Upon confiscation at the airport, you can also face a fine that they have to pay before leaving. This is surely not a pleasant experience for the tourist. This also leads to a negative reaction which can put our tourism in a negative light.

Though we love to accommodate our visitors, let's all give nature the respect it deserves by protecting our environment. Stop collecting seashells, white sand and



corals from our shores and stop buying or accepting these from local sellers or companies.

We want our future generations and visitors to enjoy the beauty of our beaches, shells and corals in a sustainable way, without destroying or disrupting the Aruban ecosystem. Help us protect what is ours! □

Unforgettable Experiences At
ARUBA OSTRICH FARM

Encounter with Ostriches & Emus
Learn about their habits and behaviors up close.

Local Craft Shop
Largest variety of locally made products in one place.

Delicious Lunch
Fresh Fruit Shakes, Smoothies, Local Ice Cold Beers & the Best Shaved Ice on the island.

10:00 AM until 4:00 PM | TOUR FEES: Adult \$15 | Child \$8

Explore the Farmers Market

Every 1st Sunday of the month

Discover locally grown produce, handmade crafts, and more while supporting Aruba's talented artisans and farmers.

Matividiri 57, Paradera, Aruba | info@arubaostrichfarm.com

Don't miss out on local, fresh produce at the Ostrich Farm's monthly farmer's market!



Every first Sunday of the month the Ostrich Farm organizes and facilitates the largest farmers market on the island. Everything sold during the farmers market are locally crafted, produced and grown. Locally artisans and farmers gather at the farmers market to showcase their products proudly.

You can find the best artisan bread & pastries from T2 Pan, hot sauces from Nonna, jams, cooking sauces, fresh egg and honey that comes from small beekeepers, vegetarian snacks from locally soured beans call Dubaru. Then you have the very talented local artisans that share their unique and one-of-a-kind art such as driftwood paintings, high quality jewelry, baby clothing, knitting products, ceramic mugs/cups and plates, Calabash art, organic soap and cosmetic from Bath & Body and Eco living and so much more!

The Farmer's market is held under a large, covered area so you can shop comfortably in the shade. The restaurant in the premises serves delicious local lunches and fresh fish when available. Ice cold local beer, smoothies, fresh fruit shakes and not to be missed serves the best shaved ice on the island! And the Ostrich tours is of course offered as well.

For everybody young and old here is something to do, shop, relax and enjoy a great family outing and most of all come and support the local artisans and farmers every first Sunday of the month from 10:00 to 14:00, Matividiri 57, follow our Facebookpage or Instagram @ arubaostrichfarm and be notified for each upcoming farmers market.

Visit the historic museum at Fort Zoutman!

(Oranjestad)—Located in the middle of downtown Oranjestad, situated right next to the government building "Cocolishi", is one of the oldest buildings of Aruba: Fort Zoutman. First constructed in 1796, this site has been used (or left unused) in many ways and have survived eras of war and attempted dismantling.

When anyone refers to Fort Zoutman, they are actually referring to two separate buildings that, over the years, have been merged: the fort and the tower. That's right, the iconic 5-story, squared tower was not part of the original structure of the fort, and is actually called "Willem III Toren". Constructed in 1867, this tower was named after the then-reigning king of The Netherlands, Willem III. Willem III Toren was originally a light tower, but after a request from Lieutenant Governor Jan Helenus in 1866, it also became a bell tower.

The fort itself was originally constructed to pro-

tect the commerce bay of Paardenbaai from pirates and other disreputable characters roaming the Caribbean Sea. Unlike the Willem III Toren, Fort Zoutman had a more tumultuous past, including the on-and-off reception of unwanted members of the English military several times (The Netherlands was at constant war with England back in the colonial era).

Over the years, both the fort and the tower had functioned as different government center points, including a tax and stamps office. For some time these two buildings also housed a police precinct and jail, and even experienced abandonment until the Cultural Center Aruba Foundation (CCA) petitioned for its renovation in 1964, turning the site into the Historic Museum it currently is.

Despite its small size, The Historic Museum guards a rich depository of the commercial, military and social history of Oranjestad, offering a glance into how the social culture of the



town came to be. If you are interested in history and want to learn more about Aruba, then Fort Zoutman should definitely be included into your itinerary.

The museum is open Monday to Friday from 9am-6pm, and Saturday from 10am-2pm.

Source: The Old Fort of Aruba by Jan Hartog.

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Hungry Piranha - Pizza, Wings & More | Twist of Flavors
The Lazy Lizard | Dunkin Donuts | Shalom Hair & Nails Bar
Magnet Perfume Jewelry & Cosmetics | Curated Lab



Aruba's underwater wonderland



ORANJESTAD - Exploring the underwater wonders is something you should definitely do during your stay in Aruba. The underwater world has everything to offer that makes a snorkel trip so exceptional; an impressive, colorful sea life with exotic fishes, turtles and beautiful coral reef. The historic shipwrecks, located on the Aruban seabed are also worth a visit. Aruba is known for its white beaches and blue oceans, which means there are many fascinating underwater spots, where you can take your snorkeling gear and we selected the top spots for you.

Tres Trapi

Tres Trapi means tree steps in Papiamento, Papiamento is together with Dutch the official language spoken on Aruba. The beach is called Tres Trapi because it is accessible by the tree steps carved into the rocks. Tres Trapi is a small rocky beach, located on the north-western side of the island, approximately 5 to 10 minute drive from Palm Beach. From the unique steps you can easily walk over the beach into the clear and turquoise blue ocean. While snorkeling you will encounter all kind of tropical fishes and sea stars. The kind of starfish you will find in the Aruban waters is the red cushion sea star. This is a starfish that is commonly found in the shallow waters of the Caribbean sea and if you are lucky during your snorkeling visit to Tres Trapi, you may come across one of the green sea

turtles. Respect the animal, keep your distance and enjoy the view. Also remember; it is a once in a life time experience.

Antilla shipwreck

Antilla is a 400-foot-long long ship, built in 1939 in Hamburg, Germany. Antilla came to Aruba, because it had to find a neutral port. When Germany invaded the Netherlands on May 10, 1940, the crew decided to let their own ship sink, to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Dutch Navy. Antilla lies on its portside in Malmok bay, and the sunken word war two ship is now one of Aruba's most popular snorkeling and dive spots. However, the ship wreck can only be reached by boat. The ship is visible from the surface and during your snorkeling trip you



be surrounded by hundreds of tropical fishes, but the ship wreck alone is already impressive enough.

Baby Beach

Baby beach; a white beach, with a crystal blue ocean. The beach is located on the southern part of the island. On the way to the famous beach, you will drive through the old capital of Aruba, San Nicolas. The old Aruban culture can be still felt and experienced here, so do not hesitate to get out of your car and walk around for a while. Baby beach is a child friendly beach, since it is shallow and the water has a pleasant temperature. The name therefore fits well with the beach. Baby beach is an excellent beach for snorkeling, especially if you want to go with small children, because the water remains shallow and there are still many underwater wonders to see. In the ocean there is an area marked until where it is recommended to snorkel and on the beach you will find different facilities. It is a perfect beach to spend your day snorkeling and relaxing.

Mangel Halto

Mangel Halto beach is located in Savaneta, on the southern-west part of the island. The beach is different from the other beaches in Aruba; it is beach full of mangroves. You reach the beach by a bridge through the mangroves and then you will have several entrances to the sea. There are diverse spots where you can enjoy a perfect beach day, wooden stairs made to enter the water and a dock to sit on and enjoy the view. Mangel Halto is also worth a visit for the snorkeling experience. Inside the bay, the water is clear and you find many colorful fish. Outside the bay is a bit more challenging for beginners because of the wind and the waves, but the coral is alive and it is just like snorkel heaven. □



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Enjoy one of the best views on Aruba at the top of the Hooiberg Hill

(Oranjestad)—If you are a regular hiker, or maybe want to spice up your morning work out session, then you might enjoy one of the most popular climbing sites on the island: The Hooiberg Hill. Accompanied with a 600-step staircase, this hill overlooks a great part of the island, the Caribbean sea, and sometimes even the Santa Anna mountain located in the coastal state of Falcon in Venezuela, providing one of the best views you can get on Aruba.

located at the center district of the island, Santa Cruz, the Hooiberg Hill is the second highest point on the island at 165 meters above sea level (or about 540 feet above sea level). The highest point is Jamanota Hill at 189 meters (620 feet), located in the Arikok National Park. The staircase that runs on the side of the hill was first built in 1951, when Mr. Eduardo Tromp constructed it. At that time, the staircase consisted of 900 steps. Over time, as the steps faced erosion, the govern-

ment decided to renovate these stairs in 1991. This new project delivered the newer staircase with only 587 steps. However, don't be fooled—it may still be a work out to get on top. In addition, there is now a gazebo placed halfway up the stairs for a little rest. The view at this resting stop is also a sight to see. The best time to climb the hill would be early in the morning or right before sunset, as it may not be as hot. However, the hill is of course open all day, every day.□



Episode CXVII- 117 - “Maishi” into abstract Art

By including essential elements of our native culture in art without intending it, we arrive at an art contrary to figurative (that is, the representation of identifiable objects through recognizable images) to abstract art, we see how abstraction proposes a new reality by not representing concrete things, but proposing a “pure art” that we can certainly enjoy beyond our reality.

Starting from this concept and using “corn” as a vital element of the work, the ideas and concepts prevail in the works presented while the visible reality becomes figurative.

Using “Maish”- Papiamento language for corn – in abstract art the results are as surprising as the importance of corn in Native American culture. For from Mexico, corn spread north and south.



When Europeans like Columbus came into contact

with people who lived in the Caribbean, North and South

America, corn was an important part of the diet of most natives while until that time, Europeans were unaware of its existence.

If we think that the first Thanksgiving was celebrated in 1621. While sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin pie were not on the menu, Indian corn certainly would have been one a plate.

For Aruba, corn was of vital importance and the most important crop followed by cassava, beans, squashes and peanuts to mention a few. Corn was sacred to the Caquetio and he respected the whole plant as its creator as mother food and revered with the greatest respect. Along with pollen and ceramic buren, ancient Aruba agro-ceramic cultures had left their native mills or Metate's known as “cudie”, testimony to the presence

of corn. This abundance of food gave time to master many expressions of the art of ceramics and a huge variety of crafts and techniques.

The cultivation of corn brought an entirely new era and progress to Amerindian societies across the continent. Yes, for those who successfully grew corn, including those found on islands and mountains. All of these Amerindian groups claim that their meat and bones are made from corn, Maish, or Zea mays, the anthology of GMO's. This is how important this wonderful plant is to many native American cultures.

To get to know more over Aruba's and its origins, its animals and culture, we highly recommend you to book your visit for our renowned cultural encounter session has been entertaining curious participants for decades. Mail us at etnianativa03@gmail.com or WhatsApp 297 592 2702 to confirm your participation. Our facilities and activities take place close to high rise hotels.□



Article by: Etnia Nativa

Whatsapp us +297 592 2702 and book your Aruban experience

Etnia Nativa is close to the high rise hotels



Aruba's cultural and literary development: Then and now



(Oranjestad)—The Aruban culture has seen many substantial developments over the course of a century. With the introduction of the Lago Refinery at the turn of the 20th century, followed by the breakout of the Second World War and the general incentive for political independence during the mid-century, a cultural identity on the island began to take form and have since developed through international and local influences.

In the pre-industrial era of the 19th century, much could not be said about a cultural identity on the island. Still being a part of a Dutch colonial territory at the time, as well as not having political or economic autonomy (Curacao was the center of commerce, cultural life, and political management of the Netherland Antilles at the time), the small population of Aruba consisted mostly of farmers and fishermen, tending to their crops and their cattle, or going out to fish to provide for their family. As Quito Nicolaas states in his article *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* (Literary History of Aruba: Cultural Life), "during the pre-industrial period, there were no significant economic activity that could have created a cultural ambience, with only one way to generate profit at the time for the sub existence of Aruban families."

It wasn't until the introduction of the Lago Refinery in San Nicolas in 1928, that the island saw a small boom in cultural manifestations



and entertainment, as farmers left the 'cunucu' (country) life to work in the refinery, which resulted in Aruba acquiring a different economic pillar. Before this, entertainment and cultural manifestations were mostly experienced by local parishes and the island's elite, who often partook in cultural and entertaining activities around the island, like going to the movie theater or coming together to share poetry on Sundays after church.

Literary life

Throughout the 19th century and up until the 1940s, there were also not much trace of a cultural climate for the cultural-literary sector on the island. Primary education was introduced on the island in the mid-19th century, followed by secondary and higher education around the late 30's and 40's. It wasn't until the 1950s, with the introduction of the E.R.N.A agreement in 1951 and the signing of the Statute in 1954, which allowed more space for and control over the economic and cultural development of Aruba, that the literary

life on the island began to grow substantially compared to decades before. This was in response to local institutions established in the 1940s for cultural and literary growth on the island, but that did not yet capture the attention of the general public. The 1950 brought with it a boom of literary production on the island, like those of V.S. Piternella, as well as migrant authors José Ramón Vicioso y Rings William Rufus, who have also contributed to the literary development on the island. The literary movement was further promoted by local broadcasters Voz di Aruba and Radio Kelkboom, with their regular broadcast of literary works. The 50s and 60s also saw the influence of international cultures, especially that of the United States. During this time, because of international influences as well as the continued prosperity of the oil refinery, cultural traditions in Aruba began to really take form and become widespread, as different worldly and local concepts were introduced in the Aruban society. With the establishment of local

television broadcast station Tele-Aruba in 1963, and with time and possibilities, local programs such as "Nos Tera" ("Our Land") started to pay more attention to the Aruban culture and worked to form a cultural consciousness within the community. The 1960s also saw the rise of local authors and artists, who were more comfortable in producing works in our native tongue, Papiamento, but who also produced works in Spanish, English and Dutch. This new phenomenon was in response to the interaction between economic growth, individual prosperity, cultural life and literary expression.

The 21st century

Nowadays, international influence on our culture is still prevalent, especially those from Latin America, the United States and The Netherlands. Nevertheless, there also exists a strong cultural identity and traditions that are exclusive to the Aruban culture, often manifesting during traditional celebrations, like Dia di San Juan/Dera Gai (St. John's Day), Dia di Himno y Bandera (National Hymn and Flag Day), Camping during Easter and much more. With the surge of social media in the last decade, artistic voices, especially those of the younger generation, has become even more prevalent and easily accessible to the community of Aruba through online platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. □



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Source: *Historia di Literatura Arubiano: E Bida Cultural* by J.R. "Quito" Nicolaas

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

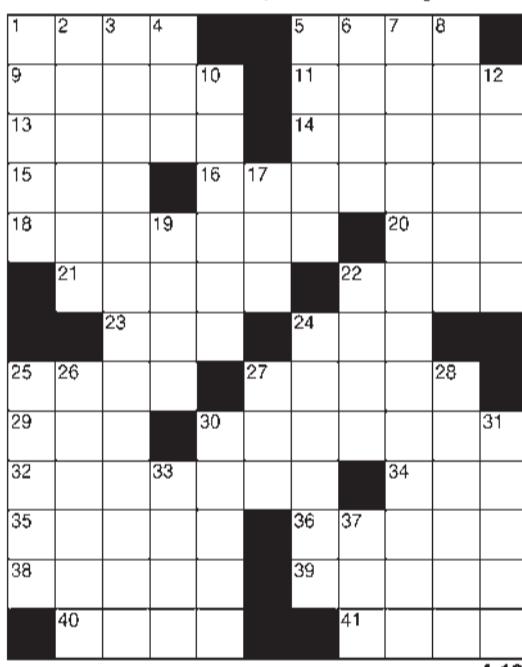
- 1 Paul Bunyan's ox
- 5 Memo letters
- 9 "Skyfall" singer
- 11 Put off
- 13 "The Castle" writer
- 14 Paris subway
- 15 Sense of self
- 16 Most economical
- 18 Belgrade native
- 20 Mardi Gras city
- 21 Closes up
- 22 Flag feature
- 23 Attempt
- 24 Stadium cry
- 25 Ibuprofen target
- 27 Gift from parents
- 29 Rap's Dr. —
- 30 Appends
- 32 Served a sentence
- 34 Even score
- 35 City on the Missouri
- 36 Get a goal

DOWN

- 1 Makes cookies
- 2 Wise sayings
- 3 Kate Bush album
- 4 Caribou's kin
- 5 Jingle writer
- 6 Crystal gazer
- 7 Crosby, Stills & Nash album
- 8 Iran, once
- 10 With no trouble
- 12 Chopper
- 17 Dance step
- 19 Au
- 22 Went under
- 24 School break
- 25 Peripheral
- 26 Black Sea peninsula
- 27 Whale school
- 28 Evening party
- 30 Sparkly crown
- 31 Is lacking
- 33 Later
- 37 Spying org.



Yesterday's answer



4-12

A X Y D L B A A X R
is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

4-12

CRYPTOQUOTE

A Q R A M S C M R G U M Q G C M B

G Z Q N S. A Q R A M G Z Q N S G U M Q G

C M B S C M R. — H N M B W Y
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: I GOT WELL BY
TALKING. DEATH COULD NOT GET A WORD
IN EDGEWISE, GREW DISCOURAGED, AND
TRAVELED ON. — LOUISE ERDRICH, "TRACKS"

Cruise ship Schedule: Apr 8 - Apr 14 2024

TUE	09	SYMPHONY OF THE SEAS	08.00	21.00	I	1
WED	10	CARNIVAL MAGIC NORWEGIAN PRIMA MARELLA VOYAGER	07.00 10.00 08.00	15.00 20.00 20.00	B C I	1
THU	11	MSC DIVINA RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS	07.00 08.00	14.00 18.00	B C	1
FRI	12	CARNIVAL PRIDE NORWEGIAN SKY	09.00 10.00	22.00 20.00	C I	1
SAT	13	NORWEGIAN JADE	07.00	20.00	C	1
TUE	16	RHAPSODY OF THE SEAS CARNIVAL HORIZON	08.00 09.00	21.00 22.00	B C	1
WED	17	ODYSSEY OF THE SEAS	08.00	23.00	C	1
SAT	20	NORWEGIAN PRIMA	10.00	19.00	C	1

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

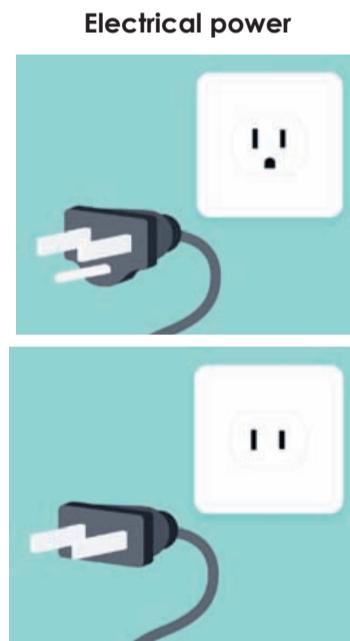
(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic—but important—information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.

lets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.

Supermarket hours
Supermarket hours may



vary depending on where you are staying on the island. Generally though, most supermarkets are open from 8am to 9 or 10pm, Monday through Saturday. On Sundays, supermarkets generally close earlier; mostly around 2pm.



Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of out-



The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.

Safety



Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occurs, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

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Instagram begins blurring nudity in messages to protect teens and fight sexual extortion

By KELVIN CHAN
AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — Instagram says it's deploying new tools to protect young people and combat sexual extortion, including a feature that will automatically blur nudity in direct messages.

The social media platform said in a blog post Thursday that it's testing out the features as part of its campaign to fight sexual scams and other forms of "image abuse," and to make it tougher for criminals to contact teens.

Sexual extortion, or sextortion, involves persuading a person to send explicit photos online and then threatening to make the images public unless the victim pays money or engages in sexual favors. Recent high-profile cases include two Nigerian brothers who pleaded guilty to sexually extorting teen boys and young men in Michigan, including one who took his own life, and a Virginia sheriff's deputy who sexually extorted and kidnapped a 15-year-old girl.

Instagram and other social media companies have faced growing criticism for not doing enough to protect young people. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Instagram's owner Meta Platforms, apologized to the parents of victims of such abuse during a Senate hearing earlier this year.

Meta, which is based in Menlo Park, California, also owns Facebook and WhatsApp but the nudity blur feature won't be added to messages sent on those platforms.

Instagram said scammers often use direct messages to ask for "intimate images." To counter this, it will soon start testing out a nudity-protection feature for direct messages that blurs any images with nudity "and encourages people to think twice before sending nude images."

"The feature is designed not only to protect people



The Instagram logo is seen on a cell phone in Boston, USA, Oct. 14, 2022.

Associated Press

from seeing unwanted nudity in their DMs, but also to protect them from scammers who may send nude images to trick people into sending their own images in return," Instagram said. The feature will be turned on by default globally for teens under 18. Adult users will get a notification encouraging them to activate it.

Images with nudity will be blurred with a warning, giving users the option to view it. They'll also get an option to block the sender and report the chat.

For people sending direct messages with nudity, they will get a message reminding them to be cautious when sending "sensitive photos." They'll also be informed that they can unsend the photos if they change their mind, but that there's a chance others may have already seen them.

As with many of Meta's tools and policies around child safety, critics saw the move as a positive step, but one that does not go far enough.

"I think the tools an-

nounced can protect senders, and that is welcome. □

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EMERGENCY

Police	100
Oranjestad	527 3140
Noord	527 3200
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San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
Ambulancia	911
Fire Dept.	115
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Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
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Jet Blue	588 2244
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At movie industry convention, leaders say blockbusters alone aren't enough

By LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

LAS VEGAS (AP) — Movie theater owners are still feeling the high from "Barbenheimer." The counterprogramming of "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer" brought audiences to cinemas around the world, ultimately earning nearly \$2.5 billion in combined ticket sales. But, gathered in Las Vegas this week for the annual CinemaCon convention and trade show, they're also acutely aware that they need more than two movies to survive.

"It is not enough to rely solely on blockbusters," said Michael O'Leary, the president and CEO of the National Association of Theater Owners. "To have a truly successful filmed entertainment industry, a variety of movies that appeal to movie goers is critical."

That means, O'Leary said Tuesday, "a strong and vibrant market for movies with smaller or medium sized budgets."

At CinemaCon, Hollywood studios, exhibitors and tech companies come together to preview what's next in moviegoing, from the films that they hope will get audi-



A visitor walks past advertisements for upcoming movies on the opening day of CinemaCon 2024 at Caesars Palace, Monday, April 8, 2024, in Las Vegas.

Associated Press

ences to the theaters to the latest and greatest in snacks, seating and projection. On stage, the message is (by design) optimistic about the future of cinemas and the industry's capacity for evolution. Whether it's streaming, piracy, VHS or television, the leaders in the filmed entertainment industry are always quick to remind that their business has survived its share of existential crises:

Someone is always forecasting its demise. O'Leary made a plea to "our friends in the financial industry" to invest more capital into the system, calling it a "smart investment" that benefits "creatives, studios, exhibition, local communities and, most importantly, movie fans."

"We know that a movie that begins its journey with theatrical exclusivity is more

successful in every subsequent ancillary platform," he added. "This should appeal to people who want as many film fans as possible to see their movies, but also to people that want to make money."

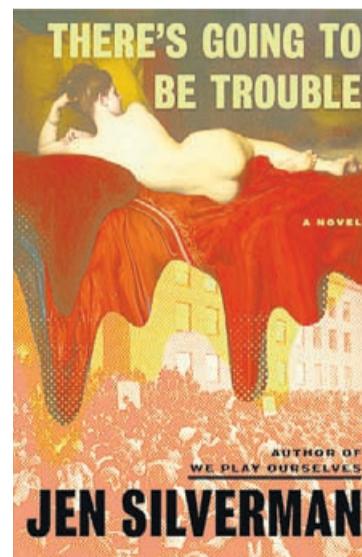
Studios including Warner Bros., Universal Pictures, Paramount, Disney and Lionsgate will all take the big stage at Caesar's Palace to show new trailers or footage from

their biggest upcoming films, from "Furiosa" to "Deadpool & Wolverine," sometimes with the help of movie stars, to stoke excitement in the people who will put these films in their theaters.

2023 was a rollercoaster year for movie theaters. The overall box office was up 20% from the previous year in the U.S., surpassing \$9 billion. But that's still \$2 billion shy of where the business was pre-pandemic. There were hits, like "Oppenheimer" and "Barbie," of course, and other notable successes from traditional studios, like "The Super Mario Bros. Movie," "Spider-Man: Across the Spider-Verse," "Wonka" and "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3." There were surprises like "Five Nights at Freddy's" and "Cocaine Bear" and sleepers like "Anyone But You."

There were also moments of successful innovation, including Taylor Swift and Beyoncé's groundbreaking partnership with AMC Theaters to release their concert films, circumventing traditional studio middlemen. "Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour" made over \$260 million worldwide, making it the highest grossing concert film of all time. □

Jen Silverman's gripping second novel explores the long afterlife of political violence



This book cover image released by Penguin Random House shows "There's Going to Be Trouble" by Jen Silverman. Penguin Random House via Associated Press

By ANN LEVIN
Associated Press

Earlier this year a former member of the far-left Baader-Meinhof gang who spent decades in hiding was arrested by German police in connection with a string of crimes. It was just another example of the long afterlife of the anti-war movement of the late 1960s, which Jen Silverman explores in a brilliant, beautifully written new novel, "There's Going to Be Trouble."

Titling it after a line from an Allen Ginsberg poem "My mind is made up there's going to be trouble" Silverman constructs an intricate, clever plot that braids together two separate stories connected by the main characters. One takes place in 1968 when Keen, an apolitical grad student at Harvard, gets drawn into the takeover of a campus building because of his desperate love for Olya, one of the organizers.

When the demonstration goes awry, he must live with the disastrous results for the rest of his lonely life as a chemistry professor and single dad. His one consolation is the daughter Olya bore him before going on the run. Everyone calls her Minnow, though she will grow up to embody the fierceness of her namesake Minerva, the Roman goddess of war.

The second storyline unfolds in 2018 during the yellow vest protests in France, where Minnow, now a 38-year-old teacher, has fled after being engulfed in a scandal in the U.S. whipped up by the religious right for helping an underage girl at her school obtain an abortion. In Paris, she gets caught up with a group of activists who, like their counterparts a half century earlier, are willing to go to virtually any length to challenge what they see as the inequities of French society.

Once again, love plays a decisive role. Just as her father fell head over heels for Olya, Minnow becomes enamored with Charles, the 23-year-old scion of a powerful French family whose father is a confidant of French President Emmanuel Macron. Though she has serious qualms about the 15-year age difference, she can't keep her hands off him and the feeling is mutual. Meanwhile, another brazen action is being planned that will also have deadly consequences.

Though the novel is a little slow to get off the ground and might have benefited from being 50 pages shorter, eventually it gathers unstoppable force as it moves toward a dramatic denouement that offers no easy conclusions. The questions Silverman poses about the ends and means of political violence are as relevant today as they were in the '60s or, for that matter, any era. □

Stewart hits 2-run HR to highlight big day for Mets bats in 16-4 rout of Braves



New York Mets outfielder Tyrone Taylor (15) celebrates a grand slam home run against the Atlanta Braves during the ninth inning of a baseball game, Thursday, April 11, 2024, in Atlanta.

Associated Press

By CHARLES ODUM
AP Sports Writer

ATLANTA (AP) — DJ Stewart hit a two-run homer in New York's four-run third inning and pinch-hitter Tyrone Taylor smashed a ninth-inning grand slam to cap the rout as the Mets beat the Atlanta Braves 16-4 on Thursday.

Jose Quintana (1-1) gave up three runs in 5 1/3 innings. Jeff McNeil drove in three runs with two hits in the best game of the season for the Mets' bats. New York set season highs for runs and with 16 hits. "I thought from the first game of the series we had really good at-bats," said New York manager Carlos Mendoza. "Even when we had the lead, we kept putting together good at-bats."

Stewart's homer, which gave the Mets a 7-0 lead, was his second of the series. The designated hitter had no hits this season before hitting a two-run homer in the Mets' 8-7 win in the series opener on Monday night.

Infielder Luis Guillorme gave up the grand slam to Taylor in his first appearance with the Braves. Guillorme was used as a pitcher for the first time since appearances on the mound for the Mets in the 2020 and 2021 seasons.

Braves manager Brian Snitker said he was trying to protect his bullpen by sending Guillorme to the mound.

"You have to look ahead,"

Snitker said. "You've got to look at the whole thing, the extra days' rest when you can and staying away from the relievers at some point in time. It's just part of getting through 162 games."

New York won two of three games in the rain-shortened series. The Braves were 10-3 against the Mets in 2023, when they won their sixth consecutive NL East title. "It means a lot," Stewart said. "They had our number last year and a lot of guys in this clubhouse remember that." Quintana did not allow a hit until Matt Olson lined a triple high off the right-field wall, just missing a homer, with two outs in the fourth. It was Olson's fifth career triple.

Right-hander Allan Winans (0-1) allowed seven runs, six earned, in five innings. Winans was recalled from Triple-A Gwinnett on Sunday when the Braves placed ace Spencer Strider on the 15-day injured list after an MRI revealed damage to the ulnar collateral ligament in his right elbow.

Strider, who led the majors with 20 wins and 281 strikeouts last season, is facing possible season-ending Tommy John surgery.

Winans struggled but didn't have much help from Atlanta's defense. Center fielder Michael Harris II misjudged a liner by Brandon Nimmo in the second inning. The shot sailed

over Harris, who was late to break on the ball, driving in Harrison Bader for a 2-0 lead. Starling Marte followed with a grounder which bounced past shortstop Orlando Arcia for an error, allowing Nimmo to score.

Mets left-hander Tyler Jay, recalled from Triple-A Syracuse on Wednesday, gave up a run in the eighth on Adam Duvall's infield single. Duvall was called out before a review showed he beat the throw to first base, allowing Austin Riley to score from third. Jay allowed one run in two innings in his major league debut.

The first pitch was delayed 42 minutes by rain.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Mets: Mendoza says "we are still having discussions" about Sunday's starter against Kansas City, following RHP Luis Severino and LHP Sean Manaea in the first two games. ... Mendoza said "we are paying attention" to Syracuse RHP Christian Scott, who allowed one run and had 10 strikeouts in five innings in a win over Worcester on Wednesday night.

UP NEXT

Mets: Severino (0-1, 3.60) will start as New York opens a three-game home series against Kansas City on Friday night. RHP Michael Wacha (1-0, 2.25), who pitched for the Mets in 2020, is scheduled to start for the Royals. □



Tiger Woods waves after making a putt on the first hole during the first round at the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club Thursday, April 11, 2024, in Augusta, Ga.

Associated Press

Tiger Woods tees off in the Masters in pursuit of a record 24th made cut, perhaps more by Sunday

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — Tiger Woods began pursuit of a record 24th consecutive made cut at the Masters with a birdie on Thursday, though the five-time champion with the fused ankle and long injury history believes he is still capable of so much more by Sunday.

Drawing a massive crowd nearly three decades after his first trip around Augusta National, the 48-year-old Woods hit a huge, sweeping fade up the first hole to begin his round. Woods then stuck his approach shot to 8 feet and made the slight bender to get into the red numbers on a day when those who went off early were going low. Woods had to follow his brilliant start with some impressive scrambling. He hit a wayward tee shot into the trees left of No. 2, punched back into the fairway, hit his approach shot over the green and had to get up and down from there for par.

Onward he went, the ankle he had fused last year only giving him a small hitch in his gait. The bigger question remains how Woods' back, which has undergone five procedures over the years, will hold up over 18 holes and beyond.

"If everything comes together, I think I can get one more," Woods said earlier in the week. He paused briefly before adding, "Do I need to describe that any more than that, or are we good?"

The first round was delayed 2 1/2 hours by weather Thursday, which meant Woods — playing with Jason Day and Max Homa four groups from the end — did not tee off until 3:54 p.m. local time, after many early starters had already finished their rounds.

It also meant that Woods was unlikely to finish his opening round before dark.

Woods is tied for the record for cuts made at the Masters with three-time champion Gary Player, who had 23 straight beginning in 1959, and 1992 champion Fred Couples, whose own streak lasted until 2007.

Woods had to fight to make the cut the last year, when the ankle he shattered in a 2021 car crash caused so much trouble. He bogeyed three of his first seven holes, battled to shoot an opening 74, then had to slog his way through heavy rain, cold weather and delays to finish off a second-round 73 on Saturday and make the cut on the number.

Woods also began his third round Saturday but was unable to complete it before dark. He withdrew before resuming it Sunday, ending his streak of completing all 72 holes of every tournament he had played at Augusta National as a professional. □

Bryson DeChambeau, matured in both game and attitude, opens with 65 to lead the Masters

By DAVE SKRETTA

AP Sports Writer

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP) — It took Bryson DeChambeau four years and 13 rounds to finally break par at Augusta National. His par.

Or at least, what he once proclaimed to be his par. DeChambeau birdied his first three holes Thursday, made five more over his last seven, and opened with a 65 to take the early lead at the Masters. It was his best round ever in the season's first major, and only his second in the 60s since the once-brash, always-outspoken DeChambeau ruffled a few feathers among the green jackets. Back in 2020, a bulked-up DeChambeau declared his power had rendered the par-72 layout a par 67, because he could reach Augusta National's four par-5s in two and the short, par-4 third hole was reachable off the tee. The comment came off as arrogance run amok, and DeChambeau got some comeuppance when he tied for 34th that year.

The former U.S. Open cham-



Bryson DeChambeau walks on the 17th green during the first round at the Masters golf tournament at Augusta National Golf Club Thursday, April 11, 2024, in Augusta, Ga.

Associated Press

pion admitted Thursday that he has taken plenty of flack for it.

"For me," DeChambeau said, "I have a level of respect for this golf course that's a little bit different than a couple years ago, and clearly today was a great test of golf, and I was able to conquer a very difficult golf course today. "Regarding the 67 comment," DeChambeau continued, "you know, you mess up. I'm not a perfect person. Everybody messes up. You

learn from your mistake, and that was definitely one."

To be sure, DeChambeau is older and wiser — a whole lot richer, too, thanks to his jump from the PGA Tour to LIV Golf — than he was four years ago. He has overcome injuries, including a fractured bone in his left wrist, and struggled with tweaks to his swing as he shed some of that muscle for a more lithe, athletic build that just might hold up better over time. Things finally clicked again

for the 30-year-old last year in the LIV event at The Greenbrier, when DeChambeau shot 61-58 on the weekend to win going away. He won again later in the year at Rich Harvest Farms near Chicago. "The thing about Bryson — people don't talk about it — he's always been one of the best putters in the world," explained Gary Woodland, who played with him Thursday. "When he drives it like he did today — I mean, he drove it really good — and he makes putts, he's obviously very good. It was a clinic. It was impressive. He didn't get out of position hardly at all." As well as things are going on the course for DeChambeau, they seem to be trending in the right direction off it. "He's one of the smartest people I know, and one of the most talented players I know, and probably one of the hardest working," said Phil Mickelson, who plays with him frequently on the LIV tour. "He has found a way to play golf that is different and unique from anybody I've ever seen play it. He

believes and knows that it gives him opportunities and advantages, and he has got the commitment and the self-assurance to not care what anybody else says." People do care what DeChambeau has to say, though. He was among the first wave of PGA Tour stars that chased guaranteed Saudi money with LIV Golf, and he remains one of the breakaway league's biggest cheerleaders. But he also realizes the resulting schism within professional golf has been detrimental to the sport, and he's joined Rory McIlroy and others in pressing for some sort of reconciliation. "Look, how do we make this work for both sides? How do we make this work for the fans?" DeChambeau asked. "I personally think that we could figure that out quickly if we just sit down and hash it out for a week."

Leave it to the golfer nicknamed "the Scientist" — a deep thinker deep in confidence — to believe such a complex problem can be solved so easily. □

Jets' Aaron Rodgers briefly thought playing career could be over after tearing his Achilles tendon

By DENNIS WASZAK Jr.

AP Pro Football Writer

Aaron Rodgers acknowledged during a podcast appearance this week he briefly thought his playing career could be over after he tore his left Achilles tendon in the New York Jets' season opener.

"I was really thinking, 'This is it. You don't come back from this injury,'" the 40-year-old quarterback said during a wide-ranging 2 1/2-hour interview on the "I Can Fly" podcast, which was published Tuesday.

Rodgers, traded to the Jets last offseason after 18 years with the Green Bay Packers, was injured just four snaps into his debut with New York on Sept. 11.

"I had this incredible offseason experience in a new city, in a new town, with new teammates, a new organization, an owner for

the first time, and really falling back in love with the game that I first fell in love

with when I was 5 years old," Rodgers said. "And it was absolutely beautiful

and special and deep and rich and yummy, and just incredible.



New York Jets quarterback Aaron Rodgers warms up before playing against the Buffalo Bills in an NFL football game, Sept. 11, 2023, in East Rutherford, N.J.

Associated Press

"And then, one of the most heartbreak nights of my life, when I played four plays. Talk about an ego death."

Rodgers said he quickly began researching Kobe Bryant's surgery to repair a similar injury during his playing days with the Los Angeles Lakers and "the doomsday of, like, my career is over kind of started to go away."

The four-time NFL MVP fought back tears while talking about his message to some of his closest friends about his recovery and rehabilitation before he flew home to California on Sept. 12.

"I said, 'I need help,'" Rodgers recalled. "This is going to be really, tough. I just need you all to be there for me on the tough days when I stop believing it's possible." □